

June 3, 2004

Ms. Betsey Bayless
Director, Arizona Department of Administration
100 N. 15th Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Director Bayless:

While in Washington D.C. for the National Governors Association Winter Meeting, I attended a briefing by Lieutenant General Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau. The focus of the briefing emphasized the changing role of the National Guard to meet the needs of our nation's growing national security missions. The previous mission of National Guard as a strategic reserve is no longer valid. Today, their mission is as an operational reserve where our country's military forces simply cannot go to war without them.

Since September 11, 2001, the demands for National Guard forces to engage in close quarters combat in places like Iraq and Afghanistan or to protect our airports, borders and critical infrastructure has been constant and is continuing to grow daily. The Arizona National Guard continues to heed my call to support major counter-narcotics operations and provide aid during recent natural disasters in Arizona including forest fires and flash flooding. Under the present system of deployment our National Guard troops are committed to our nation's military missions abroad for a period of 18 months.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Arizona National Guard, I am concerned that the men and women serving as members of our country's National Guard are not receiving the comparable long-term benefits and consideration for their military service as their active duty counterparts. Our National Guard troops carry an unequal burden because in many cases, they lose employment benefits such as the ability to accrue time towards their civilian pension plans during these extended deployments and do not receive their retirement compensation from their military service until age 60. As our National Guard members continue to honorably serve in support of our nation's security missions, we, the citizens of Arizona, should make every effort to safeguard against any disparity between the state and the federal government. These citizen soldiers deserve our utmost respect and admiration.

Ms. Betsey Bayless
June 3, 2004
Page 2

In addition to our Arizona National Guard troops, the State of Arizona is one of the largest employers of Reservists in the State (approximately 300 reservists). Because this is a national and statewide concern, I ask for a prompt and thorough review of Arizona's compensation and benefits package related to our state employees who are members of either the Arizona National Guard or one of the U.S. Reserve Units. With the increased reliance on these troops by the Department of Defense, Arizona needs to do all we can to show our support when they are serving in harm's way. If you have any questions about this issue, please feel free to contact me directly or my Policy Advisor on Military Affairs, Dion Flynn at 602-542-7007.

Yours very truly,

Janet Napolitano
Governor